

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2024

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We write in strong support of the proposed rule to restrict the flow of federal tax dollars to crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs).<sup>1</sup> CPCs masquerade as healthcare providers — intentionally locating themselves near legitimate health centers — to divert women away from real healthcare clinics. This rule would protect women by requiring CPCs that receive funding through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to prove that their organization actually assists low-income families instead of being used to disseminate dangerous medical misinformation discouraging women from seeking abortion care.

CPCs fraudulently market themselves to pregnant women at one of the most vulnerable and difficult moments of their lives by presenting themselves as legitimate reproductive healthcare clinics offering medical services.<sup>2</sup> However, when the women arrive, they receive no actual medical care, and, instead are shamed and discouraged from seeking reproductive health care services such as abortion and contraception.<sup>3</sup> These centers can increase health risk as a CPC in Massachusetts failed to diagnose an ectopic pregnancy, which later caused a life-threatening emergency for the patient.<sup>4</sup>

CPCs use deceptive signs and advertisements to attract women seeking abortion services, disguising themselves as comprehensive healthcare clinics. Once inside, women are exposed to biased counseling and misinformation, creating unnecessary barriers to exercising their reproductive rights. Deceptive practices by these centers are not only unethical, but they also pose significant threats to women's health and well-being. They place women at risk by disseminating inaccurate medical information.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengthening Temporary Assistance for Needy Families as a Safety Net and Work Program, Administration of Children and Families, October 2, 2023, <https://www.regulations.gov/document/ACF-2023-0010-0001>.

<sup>2</sup> The Problems with Crisis Pregnancy Centers: Reviewing the Literature and Identifying New Directions for Future Research, *International Journal of Women's Health*, June 8, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9189146/#cit0001>.

<sup>3</sup> Issue Brief: Crisis Pregnancy Centers, *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, October 2022, <https://www.acog.org/-/media/project/acog/acogorg/files/advocacy/cpc-issue-brief.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis pregnancy center failed to spot an ectopic pregnancy, threatening patient's life, lawsuit alleges, *NBC News*, June 28, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/womens-health/crisis-pregnancy-center-ectopic-pregnancy-lawsuit-rcna91660>.

Notably, the proposed rule asserts that CPCs' operations fail to meet the statutory goals of TANF. While one of TANF's objectives is to prevent or reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, as the rule notes, the connection of CPCs to this goal is "tenuous or nonexistent." And in fact, CPCs receiving TANF funds can continue to promote dangerous medical misinformation such as abortion pill "reversal" — an unproven and unethical treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Federal taxpayer dollars should not be used by states to fund centers that put women's lives at risk by spreading misinformation about reproductive health care. Public dollars should be targeted toward promoting public health, helping underserved children, and reducing poverty — not towards helping partisan state officials advance their war on women.

Thank you for your ongoing work to protect reproductive health care. This is a critical step towards preserving women's freedom to make personal and private health care decisions. Together, we must stop extremists from waging war on women.

Sincerely,



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Josh Gottheimer  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



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Angie Craig  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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<sup>5</sup> These centers often promote false and unproven information, such as the unverified procedure of abortion pill reversal. (Kern, R. & Reader, R. "The latest social media misinformation: Abortion reversal pills." *Politico*. August 20, 2022.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/20/abortion-misinformation-social-media-00052645>.)